

On top of these services, the Catholic Diocese has been a beacon of hope for the underprivileged in Orange County and always provides help to those in need.

The Diocese has united a culturally diverse group of people, including my Vietnamese and Latino communities, through faith, love and understanding. The Church has always been welcoming and I thank them for their service.

IN RECOGNITION OF ST.
BARTHOLOMEW CATHOLIC SCHOOL

HON. BARON P. HILL

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Mr. HILL. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate St. Bartholomew Catholic School in Columbus, Indiana for receiving the Department of Education's 2006 No Child Left Behind Blue Ribbon School Award.

St. Bartholomew Catholic School is among only 250 schools in the Nation to receive the Blue Ribbon School Award, and 1 of 14 schools in Indiana honored with the award. The award recognizes the high academic achievements of the students.

The Blue Ribbon School Award is a testament to the hard work and dedication demonstrated by the students, parents, teachers, and administrators of St. Bartholomew Catholic School, including its Principal Kathy Schubel. This school has become a model for other Indiana schools for its academic excellence.

It is my honor and privilege to recognize St. Bartholomew Catholic School for its out-

standing achievement in preparing our Hoosier children for their future opportunities. I urge St. Bartholomew Catholic School to continue to be a shining example of superior leadership, and continue its commitment to excellence in education.

INTRODUCING THE HAWAIIAN
HOMEOWNERSHIP OPPORTUNITY
ACT OF 2007

HON. NEIL ABERCROMBIE

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 6, 2007

Mr. ABERCROMBIE. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of legislation I am proud to introduce today. The Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007 is the exact same language of H.R. 5851, reported out of the House Financial Services Committee on September 28, 2006, in the 109th Congress.

The measure reauthorizes existing Native Hawaiian housing programs for 5 years and makes two adjustments to the program that will allow the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to help more Native Hawaiians whose incomes are equal to or less than 80 percent of the median income.

In 2000 Congress passed legislation authorizing the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, HUD, to provide block grants for affordable housing for Native Hawaiians through the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands. The 2000 measure also authorized HUD home loan guarantees for low-income Native Hawaiians. Eligible borrowers include Native Hawaiian families, the Depart-

ment of Hawaiian Home Lands, the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and private nonprofit organizations experienced in planning and developing affordable housing for Native Hawaiians.

The Hawaiian Home Ownership Opportunity Act of 2007 reauthorizes these programs and adds a new provision authorizing loan guarantees for home mortgage refinancing. This introduces greater flexibility and allows families to take advantage of lower interest rates as millions of other American families have. The measure would also permit the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands to issue bonds. This will allow the Department to service more low-income families without a large increase in appropriations.

This bill is about homeownership; this is not welfare or public assistance. It offers another tool for a family to provide for a basic need, housing. This is unbelievably important in Hawaii where land is scarce and the median home price on the island of Oahu is \$639,000 and the median condominium price is \$310,000. This measure will advance our efforts to address housing affordability in the islands.

I would like to thank the House Financial Services Committee Chairman BARNEY FRANK and Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity Chairwoman MAXINE WATERS who have been extremely supportive in dealing with the housing problems of Hawaii. I would also like to recognize my colleague from Hawaii, Congresswoman MAZIE HIRONO, who, like Chairman FRANK and Chairwoman WATERS, is a cosponsor of this legislation.

I urge my colleagues to help the residents of Hawaii and support this legislation.